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ABSTRACT

General extrinsic and intrinsic forces pressing for change in schools are examined, and specific attention is paid to five problem areas that illustrate the complexity of issues facing those who wish to study or facilitate educational change. Extrinsic pressure arises from ongoing societal change in the face of a dichotomy between educational theory and practice. Intrinsic pressures for change evolve from the need for constant renewal of institutions and individuals in order to remain interesting and creative. Specific issues complicating change procedures include (1) a limited knowledge base concerning the process, effectiveness, and relevance of particular educational changes; (2) the ethos and milieu of the educational profession, strongly supportive of continuity; (3) the inertia of organizational and mental structures; (4) questionable transferability of innovative procedures from one field situation to another; and (5) the question of ideological intent--planners and classroom teachers more often than not prefer merely to tinker with the educational system rather than to introduce substantive change. (MB)

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Notes Toward the Presentation "Problems Associated with Change in Educational Institutions"

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Notes Toward the Presentation

"Problems Associated with Change in Educational Institutions"

We are beyond debating the inevitability of change in our society. As Bennis (1970) indicates the contemporary debate has swung from change versus no change to the methods employed in controlling and directing change. That the schools are part of society is sufficient cause in itself to consider the question of change and innovation as it relates to them. However, the concern over change in education takes on a more binding perspective in the light of what most observers see as a widening gap between changes in society and what we know about good teaching on the one hand, and what actually takes place in the schools on the other. This observation is clearly one of the most important issues facing schools today and a major source of pressure with which educational institutions must deal in the future. Thus, I approach the issue of change in teacher education as a means of helping to resolve the issue as to why it is so difficult to alter and change the schools in response to the various needs of society.

The foregoing might be termed the extrinsic need - there are outside pressures for change. But there is also an intrinsic need stemming from the necessity for constant renewal within institutions if they are to remain fulfilling places to work

and to study as well as within individuals if they are to remain creative and interested in their work.

Such general needs provide a direction but not the type of issues from which one gains an understanding of the complexities of the questions that face those wishing to study or facilitate change. Let us then turn to a consideration of more specific problem areas.

The Limitations of the Knowledge Base

When approaching the matter of change in education either from an elucidating or facilitative point of view, one of the main problems encountered is the limited knowledge base. There are three facets to the problem. First, the change process itself is poorly understood in education and there is not a coherent theory of social change to draw on. Second, the substantive questions related to specific innovations are usually without a secure knowledge base to determine whether one practice is really better than another. Third, what we do know about change and the theories on which most change models have been based have been drawn from fields other than education. Let us consider each of these in turn.

The lack of knowing how change takes place in education has deep roots. Don Martindale, after describing the burgeoning growth of sociology since the second world war describes the

field in the following way. "And from the midst of all these dramatic transformations in sociology has come the admission that its theory of social change is the weakest branch of sociological theory (Martindale, 1967).

He indicates that sociology has been a science of structure but not of change which is something of a paradox since the latter was one of the purposes for its development.

In positing this argument, I do not wish to discount and denigrate much of the work that has been done in education. Rather, I wish to draw attention to the fact that despite a burgeoning literature on change, developments are in the embryonic stage with the attendent problems of conflicting arguments, unclear paradigms, and models of change that have simply not stood the test of time or empirical verification. To illustrate, I will consider two examples arising out of two major contributions made in the field of change in the United States - the work of Rogers and Shoemaker and the R-D & D model developed by Clark and Guba.

Rogers and Shoemaker (1971), after an exhaustive study of numerous innovations in agriculture, rural sociology, and education developed five criteria for the adoption of innovations. These included: a) ease of explanation and communication to others; b) possibility of trial on a partial or limited basis; c) ease of use; d) congruence with existing values, and e) obvious superiority over practices that

existed previously. These criteria have come to be accepted as part of the conventional wisdom of educational change. However, following the analysis of the Rand Study data, in which over 85 projects were analyzed, Milbrey McLaughlin (1976) concluded that her results were at odds with each of the traditional criteria posited by Rogers and Shoemaker. What credibility can one place in the conventional wisdom of the change literature in the face of such contradiction?

It is particularly difficult to assess such contradictions in the absence of a theory of change in either education or sociology.

The evidence on the utility of the R-D & D model for educational change, developed by Clark and Guba and followed in the postwar years in the United States as a means of renewing the schools, mostly suggests that it failed at the point vital in the whole process - the implementation of innovation in the schools. Goodlad (1975) regards the R & D approach as not a change strategy at all but a production mechanism of answers in search of problems. House (1975) argues that R-D & D is based on the "doctrines of transferability" which ignores the differences which exist in separate classrooms. Dalin (1973) who was among the first to raise questions about the R & D approach to educational change, has recently has summed up much of the current criticism:

> "The scepticism of local adopters or implementors concerning 'outside' innovation undermines the expected effectiveness of an R & D approach to change. Also, few institutions have the resources or the time to change in full-scale development efforts refining, testing and evaluating proposed innovations. In addition, R & D approaches to change tend to accompany 'top-down' change strategies, strategies that ignore the critical importance of local values and initial commitment and support, or the consonance necessary for significant and successful change." (Dalin, 1977, p. 13)

This illustration was not intended to offer a critique of R-D & D (this has been done so well elsewhere), but rather to illustrate that despite the massive investment of funds in the United States on renewal in schools, the failure of the curriculum reform movement may well have been due to an inadequate understanding of the change process.

By now the phrase "we know nothing about teaching as a result of research" is more of a hackneyed cliché than a tenet of wisdom. Certainly we know a great deal about learning and about effective ways of teaching. What we do not know much about are the situations in which that knowledge applies and can be used effectively and those where it cannot. Too quickly educators have reached for general principles of teaching

and learning and tried to apply these generally. It is now being recognized what most teachers apparently knew all along that the general principles usually do not apply in any situation. To prescribe one form of instruction such as individualized learning for all is like prescribing penicillen to masses of people. Certainly it works for some who happen to have a malady that requires it and is harmless to others; but it is detrimental to the well being of many. Yet in education we prescribe many things for all. The application of any instructional tecnnique is dependent on the knowledge of the complexities of the classroom about which we know very little.

Another issue on which there is considerable debate is whether basic principles of teaching and learning do exist in a field such as education. Glass (1975) in discussing the wisdom of scientific inquiry in education has argued against the utility of attempting to derive general principles from research in education. In his opinion research efforts should be directed at the evaluation of types of learning and teaching in specific settings. While his arguments totally contradict the conventional wisdom of educational research which is directed at the elucidation of principles, the complexities of most educational settings would tend to bear out much of what he has said.

Both in the elucidatory and managerial sense education has borrowed heavily from other more established disciplines and fields. The change literature is no exception. The work of

Rogers and Shoemaker (1971) referred to earlier serves to illustrate this point. They drew heavily on agriculture and rural sociology. Similarly, the work of Hagerstrand in Scandinavia if often cited as one of the pioneers in the field of adoption of innovations. Ordinarily, drawing on other fields is a strength in a discipline; however, it would seem that we may have been "trapped" in education. By drawing so heavily on fields such as agriculture and rural sociology we have made the eroneous assumption that the development and adoption of innovations in education were essentially the same. Clearly, they are different. A farmer deciding to purchase a radio is quite a different thing from a teacher deciding to use individualized instruction. The farmer has a direct pay off in terms of entertainment and requires no behavioural change while the teacher must put forth more work and effort, has only interim pay off and must undergo a substantial change in behaviour. The preoccuption with other fields has trapped educators into developing models of change that has placed most of the emphasis on the "front end" of development ignoring the implementation phase of change.

This argument is not intended to suggest that the schools have been ignored in the literature on change. One can cite works by Miles (1964, 1967) who studied the organizational development of the school and did much to map the terrain, by Fullan (1976) who has considered the question of the user of innovation, by the Rand Corporation in assessing the effects of change agents on the schools (Mann, 1976; McLaughlin, 1976),

and by Sarason (1971) who has discussed the culture of the school and the problem of change as examples where the schools were the focal point for research and development. Yet a recent literature review conducted on adoption (Aylen et al, 1975) found a paucity of empirical studies on adoption in education.

The Problem of the Ethos and the Milieu

Having attended schools for a goodly portion of our lives, we are experts and can prescribe what ought to be at a moments notice. However, where the territory of the school has been mapped minus the conventional wisdom, the polemics, and the various prescriptive ideologies using sociological techniques (Miles, 1967; Lortie, 1975) a fairly clear, consistent picture of the teaching ethos and milieu emerge.

The teaching ethos has been described by Lortie as one of conservatism, individualism and presentism. His arguments are based on a very thorough sociological analysis of the American school teacher. He posits that the recruitment pattern which selects those who are happy with the schools as they are, the sink or swim induction and sociolization patterns which fail to create new standards of behaviour for beginning teachers, and the work patterns which isolate teachers create a conservative ethos tipping the scales toward continuity not change.

Lortie's argument that teachers work alone is supported by the earlier work of Miles in which he focused on the organiza-

tional aspects of the school in his attempt to identify properties of the schools as social systems.

In reporting data from the Rand study on change Mann (1976) indicates "It was a universal experience of these projects that, regardless of their degree of success, they were studiously ignored by their district colleagues." Such individualism poses problems to the management of change. It not only restricts the spread of ideas and innovation through the lack of linkage systems but it reduces the tendency for evaluation among peers and the cross fertilization that accrues from the exchange of ideas.

The primary of psychic rewards, which are subjective valuations in teaching, foster a present-oriented rather than a future-oriented point of view among teachers. This Lortie calls presentism. It is encouraged by the milieu in which teachers work where it is hard to gain mastery and where the task is shrouded in uncertainty. Neither foster a strong tendency toward deferred gratification. Rewards are here and now, taken when they can be had. Thus teachers do not work collectively toward a strong technical culture but live for the satisfactions of the day.

These characteristics of the teaching ethos - conservatism, individualism and presentism - are fostered in the milieu in which teachers are socialized (long before they decide to become teachers in most cases), recruited and work. Clearly, this

ethos mitigates against altering the school.

That teaching is carried out as rhetoric and not as inquiry at all levels of education is another part of the ethos germaine to self renewal in schools. There is little difficulty in finding evidence and testimony to support the notion that a subject matter orientation viewed didactically becomes internalized very early in children and prevails throughout schooling. In describing the perceptions of teaching in Britain, France and West Germany, Lynch and Plunkett (1973) describe a dominance of submissive relationship between teachers and students with scholastic knowledge being transferred from one persons head to another. Pressures toward higher academic standards has tended to reinforce the situation in these countries. After a review of practices in schools, Hoetker (1961) used the phrase "the persistence of recitation" to describe the continued use of a single mode of instruction despite 50 years of attempts to change it. The phrase he coined is as appropriate now as it was then. Thus teachers are dispensers of knowledge engaged in what Schwab (1967) has termed a "rhetoric of conclusions".

The emphasis on the rhetorical approach to subject matter finds supporters in many quarters and critics in others. The purpose here is not to criticize or defend this particular mode of teaching but rather to consider the implications it has for self renewal in the schools.

First, the prevalence of this mode of teaching causes an early internalization of a rhetorical approach to teaching and learning among students from whom the subsequent generation of teachers are to be drawn. Thus the cycle of socilization, induction and career teaching perpetuates this mode of teaching and learning.

Second, we know that one's vocation has a profound effect upon how one thinks, lives, and plays. It is only reasonable to assume that the way one has come to approach the substance of one's work will have a profound effect on the way he evaluates it. To approach teaching as a rhetoric of conclusions derived from an outside source is to be left without the stance, style and criteria to assess the substance of one's endeavours. Or to state it another way, despensing knowledge to young people in a proprietory role hardly prepares one for an inqiry orientation to one's own work particularly since the predominent mode of socialization into the profession is apprenticeship in the classroom.

The situation is further exacerbated by what Miles (1967) calls a low knowledge component in schools and Kuhn (1962) and Schwab (1962) would refer to as the lack of a built in mechanism for structural revolution. Matthew Miles raises the paradox that while schools deal centrally with the dissemination of knowledge with respect to the curriculum they teach, when it comes to knowledge about their own work processes derived

from fields such as learning psychology, sociology and the various fields in education such as evaluation, their direct use of knowledge is very limited. He argues that this lends itself toward ritualism and tradition.

In discussing the ethos of teaching, I have already touched on certain parts of the milieu which reinforces the ethos. Two other aspects of the milieu are germaine to this discussion.

The lack of clear goals in education has been identified both by Miles (1967) who views the problem from the perspective of the school and by Lortie (1975) who describes it in terms of the teachers perception of why he/she teaches. In either case, the possibility of altering the system is limited by the extent that clarity in purpose is lacking. How does one determine whether one innovation is better than another when the purpose of one's endeavour is unclear to begin with?

The lack of competativeness in education has been identified by a number of persons (Miles, 1967; Morrish, 1976) as part of the educational milieu which encourages continuity rather than change. What is the pay off to a teacher in making use of an innovation? What is the pay off to a school in doing a better job of teaching?

The milieu of the teaching work place and the ethos thus described must be viewed from a holistic perspective not as isolated facets as the foregoing discussion might suggest.

As such, one becomes aware of the powerful forces for continuity that emerge from the interaction of the various points raised. For example, the continuity emerging through the recruitment process is reinforced by the work place and the didactic approach of those in teacher education as well as the schools. The lack of clearly defined goals and a competitive approach among the schools provide a vacuum where forces might otherwise exist to offset the forces of continuity.

The Problem of Structure

Closely related to the ethos of teaching and the milieu just discussed is the notion of structure. While we think of ethos as the spirit or the ways of thought of a people, structure is the way the components fit together to give something its peculiar character. What organizational and mental structures do teachers work in that might constrain or provide a force for change? The general argument of systems theory, that social systems (structures) are stable or homeostatic (Morrish, 1976) is not unlike Sarason's (1971) often quoted them "the more things change, the more they stay the same". While the systems theorists would argue that continuity results from the tendency for any system to retain equilibrium, Sarason posits that despite deliberate attempts to create new settings individuals forget history, do not attend to process, and retain former behavioural regularities. We know that once routines and patterns are set up the built in inertia has a way of replicating those routines and patterns and

ignoring alternative structures. The maintenance of a structure is insured in part by the lack of time people have to change them and also because the structure once developed is often the most efficient way of doing something.

A contrast to this situation exists in what Kuhn (1962) calls scientific revolution and Joseph Schuab (1962) static and fluid inquiry. Both argue that science proceeds through periods of normal science (Kuhn) or static inquiry (Schwab) in which the structures remain intact and and activity is carried out within those structures. As data accumulates that does not conform to these structures pressure is built up for a second stage of the cycle which is a scientific revolution (Kuhn) or a period of fluid inquiry (Schwab) in which a new structure is created within the field often with a new direction. The reward system within the scientific community is such that there is pay off in seeking and creating alternatives which will eventually lead to a new structure. That no such methodology or habit exists in education weighs heavily on the side of continuity.

There are a number of reasons why structural change or revolution is very difficult in the schools. Teachers hardly have time to cope with the day to day tasks of their work let alone think about change or new structures. Educators have not had a habit of analyzing what exists in the schools which is a precursor to the type of structural

revolution Schuab and Kuhn talk about. Sarason (1971) argues that most individuals who work within certain structures have not examined their work pattern within that structure or thought about alternatives.

The Problem of Ownership

Dalin (1977) has raised the question of the ownership of an innovation as something that has largely been ignored in considerations of change. Ownership in this sense implies a feeling of possession, involvement and pay off from an innovation. Who owns an innovation? The teacher, the student, the change agent, or the authorities? Innovation for whom? Since ownership is determined to a large extent by the congruence between one's own beliefs and values and those implied by a particular innovation, to what degree can an idea spawned in a curriculum laboratory in London be transferred to a location in Wales? The assumption behind the R & D model was that ownership was not a problem because well developed innovations were transferable in some form to the consumer who while rational was nevertheless passive (Havelock, 1971). House (1975) has termed this notion the doctrine of transferability. He argues that the shift needed is to establish an innovation credit for teachers who can draw on resources for innovations they agree to. While this might solve the ownership problem, it is naive to assume that the busy, overworked teacher that we have described has either the time or inclination to invent or select innovations likely to produce substantive change.

The Problem of Ideology

In a very real sense, those of us who have become interested in change as a field of endeavour and inquiry, must face the ideological question of whether the principle players from the master planners to the classroom teachers really want change in the schools. One could speculate on a fairly sound basis that those to benefit most from innovation and change in education have been the developers, the change agents and the ODers. Most teachers benefit little and could care less and the master planners wish to tinker but not to basically change the system.

In the case of the teachers why should we expect them to entertain notions of change or have enthusiasm for the process. They are heavily burdened in performing a difficult task (Lortie 1975) and like most of us are doing the best conceivable job they can under the constraints of the work place.

At the level of the master planners, who reflect the governments and the bureaucracies who employ them, it is questionable whether substantive change is a desideradum. As a science teacher during the period of curriculum reform in the 60's it occurred to me that were we to have been successful in implementing the intent of the newer curriculum materials in all classrooms of the nation, and assuming that schools did have some effect that we would not only be involved in a revolution in the school curriculum but a restructuring of many societal

values and institutions because students would have emerged with a different thought process, surely this would have been more than the master planners bargained for. Since implementation failed on a mass scale the question is largely one of academic speculation. In this connection House in a discussion of role played by innovation in modern society states:

> "The basic facts about a technocratic society is that the status quo is maintained by constant innovation. Of course, changes must be of a very particular kind, externally invented and by the major technocratic institutions themselves... But for society as a whole these are changes of content, not of structure. Innovation allowable within that structure have very definite limits."

From those interviews I have had with high level education planners employed by the governments what House has said applies because it is quite obvious that there are two types of change that are inconceivable to them - those which are substantial and those which they cannot control.

From this line of argument one could easily build a case which posits innovation as merely tinkering with the educational system which remains in a period of static inquiry or normal science.

Lest we become enamoured with blaming the ethereal "they" the incomparable philosopher Peanuts reminds us that the enemy may be us. While changes take pace in society at an alarming rate, we somehow expect institutions to go on as they always have as psychic derricks of stability maintaining a perpetual oil slick to quiet the turbulent waters of societal change. Perhaps we look to the school as one.

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